
If you believe you are eligible to vote and encounter difficulty registering, please contact the Division of Elections of the Tennessee Secretary of State:

Division of Elections
312 Eighth Avenue North, 8th Fl.
William Snodgrass Tower
Nashville, TN 37243-0309
(615) 741-7956 (voice)
(615) 741-1278 (fax)

If the Tennessee Secretary of State is unable to help you, or to report a problem, contact:

U.S. Department of Justice, Civil Rights Division
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Voting Section, Rm. 7254 - NWB
Washington, D.C. 20530
(202) 307-2767 (voice)
(800) 253-3931 (toll-free)
(202) 307-3961 (fax)
www.usdoj.gov/crt

This pamphlet is provided for informational purposes only, as an aid to further inquiry. The laws in many states are revised frequently, and may have changed since this pamphlet was issued. It is your responsibility to determine whether you are lawfully eligible to vote, and criminal penalties can result from voting when ineligible or making false statements on a registration form.

Issued December, 2000

U.S. Department of Justice

Civil Rights Division



Restoring Your Right to Vote

TENNESSEE



The right to vote is an important civil right in a democracy as well as a civic responsibility, and yet many persons who have been convicted of a crime do not know whether they are eligible to vote. For both federal and state elections, the right to vote is controlled by the law of the state in which you live. Some states restrict the right to vote for persons who have been convicted of a crime. This pamphlet is intended to help you determine whether you are eligible to vote in the state in which you live, and if so, what steps you must take to be permitted to vote.

What law governs whether my felony conviction limits my right to vote?

The impact of a criminal conviction on the right to vote varies widely from state to state. Whether you can vote after being convicted of a crime is determined by the state in which you live, not the state in which you were convicted.

Can I vote while I'm incarcerated in Tennessee?

If you are a resident of Tennessee who was convicted of a felony on or after May 18, 1981, you are ineligible to vote unless your civil rights have been restored.

Different guidelines may apply for persons convicted prior to this period. Please contact the Division of Elections of the Tennessee Secretary of State for a copy of the applicable guidelines.

If you are a resident of another state who is temporarily incarcerated in Tennessee, you may be able to vote by absentee ballot in your home state. You need to consult the law of your home state regarding both criminal convictions and absentee ballots to see if this is a possibility.

I have been released from incarceration. How do I restore my right to vote?

Persons convicted of murder, aggravated rape, treason, or voter fraud after July 1, 1986, or of rape after June 30, 1996, are ineligible to have their voting rights restored.

For other felony convictions after June 30, 1996, you may seek restoration of your voting rights after the maximum sentence imposed for your conviction has expired, or after you have been pardoned, by petitioning the circuit court of the county where you live or where you were convicted.

If you were convicted after July 1, 1986 but before June 30, 1996 of a felony other than murder, aggravated rape, treason, or voter fraud, you may request that either the board of probation and parole or the authority that supervised or incarcerated you during your sentence issue a Certificate of Restoration of Voting Rights. You are eligible to request this certificate after either being pardoned or after the maximum sentence which was imposed for your conviction has expired.

How do I obtain a pardon?

To apply for a pardon, you may request an application from the Board of Probation and Parole at 404 James Robinson Parkway, Nashville, TN 37243. Send the completed application along with character references and any supportive documentation back to the Board. The Board will review the materials and may schedule a hearing. The Governor will ultimately review the materials and decide whether to grant or deny the pardon.

What if my conviction was for a federal crime?

Tennessee applies the same rules whether you were convicted of a federal or state crime.

What if I was convicted in another state?

The same rules apply for Tennessee voters even if the conviction occurred in another state.

What happens if I move to another state?

If you move to another state, your right to vote will be controlled by the laws of that state.

What are Tennessee's other voter registration requirements?

Any citizen of the United States, who is or will be 18 years of age or older before the date of the next election and who is a resident of Tennessee may register to vote unless disqualified under the law.

When do I need to register to vote?

In order to participate in an election, a qualified voter must be properly registered no later than 30 days before the election. The election commission office will process any by-mail voter registration form that has been postmarked at least 30 days before the election.

Where do I go to register?

Qualified voters register to vote by obtaining and completing a voter registration form and filing the form with the local county election commission. In Tennessee, persons may register in person or by mail.

Registration forms may be completed at the local county election commission office, Department of Safety, Department of Health, Department of Human Services, Department of Mental Health and Mental Retardation, Department of Veteran's Affairs, public libraries, county clerk's offices, and register of deed's offices.